

History of Twelve Points: A City within a City

“Before Twelve Points”

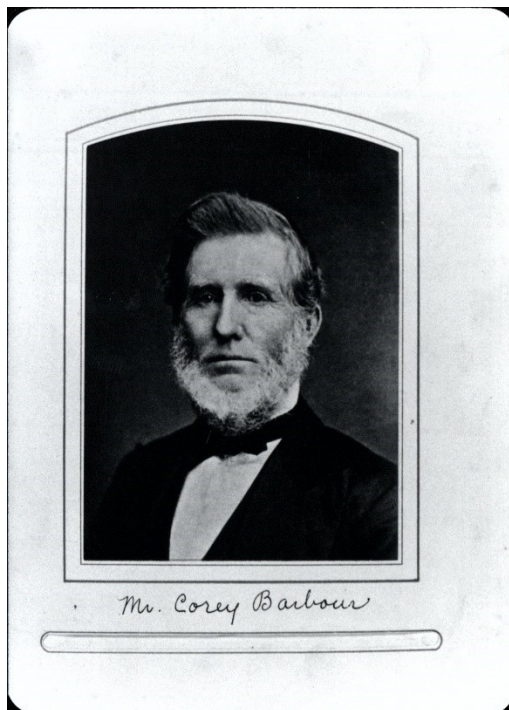
According to the map of Harrison Township in the 1874 Atlas Map of Vigo County, Indiana, the northern portion of what would become Twelve Points was farmland owned by a man by the name of Corey Barbour. Corey was born in New York State in 1807, and his family moved to Fayette Township in 1817 where they were one of the earliest settlers of Vigo County, and one of the original settlers of Fayette township. In 1829, Corey’s father Daniel purchased 160 acres of the farmland that would become Twelve Points and gave it to his son. A few years later in 1834, Corey purchased an additional 160 acres from what had been part of the Markle estate. During his lifetime, Barbour was reputed to have the best farm in Vigo County. He was an enthusiastic and passionate farmer, and was a founding member of the Vigo Agricultural Society, of which he was once president. He regularly bred award-winning livestock and made avid use of new agricultural technologies. Corey died in 1879 at the age of 72. His house once stood at the current location of the Saints Home Church of God in Christ on thirteenth street.

(for some more history and a sketch of his house by Peddle:

https://digital.library.in.gov/Record/WV3_rose-831)

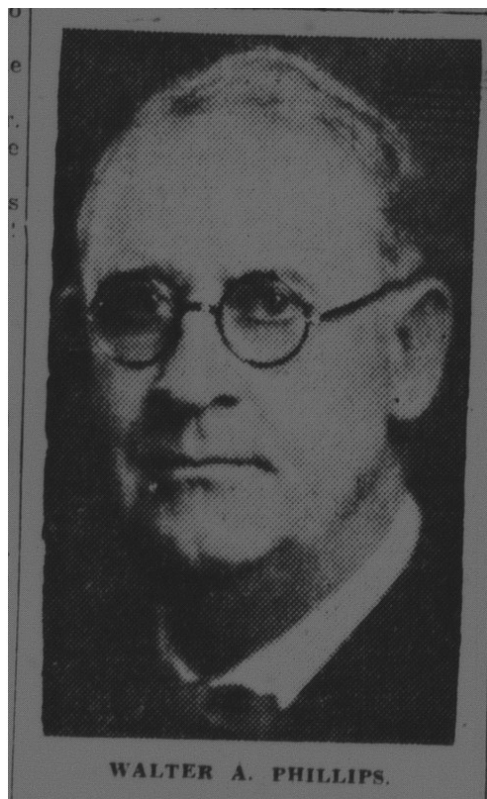
Upon his death, a portion of his lands were left to his wife Lydia. Another 80 acres were reserved for a city park, which would become Collett Park. The rest of the land was sold at auction.

After the death of his wife, his property went to his sister, Sarah Louise Barbour, and later sold to the husband of another of Corey’s sisters, Henry Ketchum. During the time it was owned by the Ketchums, the land contained a cherry orchard and even sported a skating rink.



“Walter Phillips: The Father of Twelve Points”

Walter Phillips was many things. He was an aggressive and hard-headed businessman, though he was also enthusiastic and willing to help other businessmen get started. He was also a dreamer and visionary, and his vision was to develop the community that would become Twelve Points. In 1889, all of the land east of Lafayette Avenue to Lost Creek Township was owned by a New York land speculator named Smith. Much of this land had once been part of the Barbour farm. Phillips was a deputy surveyor employed to survey this land and lay it out in lots. As part of his compensation, Phillips was given his choice of lots. Phillips chose the lot at the corner of Lafayette and Grand, purchased the adjoining lot, and built their first home in 1890. He would occasionally sell other lots for Mr Smith, and in 1897 he began in earnest to develop the neighborhood of Twelve Points. He started his own real estate business at 1272 Lafayette Avenue. Phillips rapidly purchased property after property and erected the building that would house many of Twelve Points flourishing businesses.



In the early years, the area around Twelve Points was largely dirt roads and farmland dotted with a few houses and businesses. Largely through the efforts of Walter Phillips and other early businessmen, the community grew and flourished. By the 1920s, Twelve Points had grown to include a bank, a hotel, a movie theater, three doctors offices, seven bakeries, twenty groceries, and many other businesses. By the 1950s, when US-41 and IN-63 still ran down Lafayette Avenue, Twelve Points could boast that every building was occupied and every business prospered.

During the intervening years, Twelve Points experienced a downward swing. In 1977, a revitalization effort was underway with new businesses, a park, new sidewalks, new street lamps, and more parking facilities. Twelve Points once again began to flourish. However, in 1981, against the wishes of Twelve Points businesses, Terre Haute installed left turn lanes on the intersections of Twelve Points, which resulted in the elimination of a substantial amount of parking available for shoppers. By 1984, not much had changed except for more degradation, though Twelve Points was still a center for shopping and had a few restaurants. Twelve Points still retained its neighborhood spirit, and residents and business owners continued to work for improvements. (Tribune, November 22, 1984)

The downward swing of 12 Points had several contributing factors. US-41 and IN-63 was re-routed to Third Street, and the mall opened in 1968. A decline in manufacturing jobs is also cited as a principal cause.

“Thomas Funeral Home”

The original funeral home was established in 1898 and located where the theater is now. It moved to the house in 1922.

Websites:
many with historic photos

<http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/24676>

<https://12pointsrevitalization.org/history/>

https://12pointsrevitalization.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Twelve_Points_National-Registration_Application_Form_Vigo_CO_Nom.pdf